



# Invasive Plant Alert<sup>1</sup>

## Summer Snowflake

*Leucojum aestivum* L.

Also known as giant snowflake, snowbells, and meadow snowflake. The US Forest Service does not consider it to be especially invasive. Typically, this species is cultivated in gardens and escapes to native habitats.

## Where to Look

Summer snowflake is a hardy species that is very moisture-tolerant and has been found in marshes, wet meadows and willow thickets. It is extremely tolerant of soil type and will grow in sand, loam and clay soils although it prefers soils with a more neutral or alkaline pH. It can tolerate both partial and full sun exposure and according to the USDA, it is commonly found by roadsides, fields and waste spaces (0-500m).



Figure 1 Flowers, leaves, ovary and seed of *Leucojum aestivum* (Plants for a Future).

This species has a wide native range in Europe spanning Britain, France, Spain, Greece, Iran and Crimea. It is found from New Brunswick, Canada down through South Carolina and as far west as Missouri, Arkansas and Louisiana and has also been reported in California and Oregon. In our area it has been reported from Virginia, Delaware, Maryland, and Pennsylvania.

## Identifying the Plant

Summer snowflake is a perennial herb growing from 30-60 cm. Its linear, blade-like leaves are a deep green, about 3-6 mm wide. The flowers, which bloom in the spring, are white with yellowish green spot near apex, broadly oval-shaped and the seeds that are produced are black (Flora of North America online). The species can be confused with other members of the lily family such as snowdrops, nodding star of Bethlehem and fairy lily.



Figure 2 Close-up of distinct green markings on the white, bell-shaped flowers (NPS)

## How to get rid of it?

There is not a lot of information available on control. However, like other members of the Amaryllidaceae the bulbs can prove difficult to remove. For physical control, remove all bulbs. To avoid soil disturbance one can cut the shoots and the cover the area in plastic until the bulbs are exhausted. Information on chemical control is not available.



Figure 3. *L. aestivum*. Jack Sheper 2011 Floridata.com

## Resources

USDA Plant profile: *Leucojum aestivum*. <http://plants.usda.gov/java/profile?symbol=LEAE#>

US Forest Service: <http://www.fs.fed.us/r9/wildlife/range/weed/Sec3B.htm>

Flora of North America: [http://www.efloras.org/florataxon.aspx?flora\\_id=1&taxon\\_id=200028052](http://www.efloras.org/florataxon.aspx?flora_id=1&taxon_id=200028052)

Plant Invaders of Mid-Atlantic Natural Areas, 4<sup>th</sup> ed. (2010). <http://www.nps.gov/plants/alien/pubs/midatlantic/midatlantic.pdf>

<sup>1</sup> This species has been identified as a potential or emerging threat to natural areas in the mid-Atlantic region